

**Testimony before the Appropriations Committee
In Opposition to Governor Malloy's Budget Cuts to DMHAS
Thursday, February 18, 2016**

Good Evening, I, Benjamin Rivera, am a 40 year Latino and resident of Newington who struggles with bipolar disorder. I have been receiving various treatments from InterCommunity such as medications, psychotherapy, and employment assistance. Also, I benefit from services from DSS and participate in social activities rendered by Advocacy Unlimited that help me cope with my daily stresses of life. My faith and all of these programs funded by the DHMAS budget have helped me maintain sobriety since July 31, 2014, part-time employment since January 27, 2015 and good health. Also, I have managed to maintain community and personal relationships which was terribly impossible for me to obtain before.

I believe that entertaining the notion of these budgets cuts that will impact the DHMAS budget will be unproductive and a significant case of callus neglect toward individuals with special needs. This will not only affect me it will also affect families and communities in the State of CT. If it weren't for these existing services and agencies, I do not know where I would be today.

Mental illness is a growing epidemic, not just in Connecticut, but also at a national level. It needs to be addressed appropriately and taken into consideration. I think it would be a shame to digress from the progress that has already been made. I humbly request that the Appropriations Committee exhaust all means possible in order to avoid implementation of these budget cuts.

Thank you to the Appropriations Committee for the opportunity to testify here today. Thank you to the keep the promise coalition for enabling me advocate for people like myself with mental disabilities who will be directly affected by these rulings.

God bless,
Benjamin Rivera